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Charity basketball tournament dishes out fun and funds

August 9th, 2012

Basketball players have been turning out for the Gamecocks tournament for the last 22 years.



Sean Loucks, the founder of the tournament, has a storied basketball career.

Credit: Michael Radoslav/Gleaner News

By Michael Radoslav

Surveying the gymnasium at Royal St. George College (120 Howland Ave.) was like walking into an ageless basketball wonderland: teenagers squared off against middle-aged men, a 70-year-old warmed up for his game on the sidelines, and a referee called the shots in a chicken suit.

At the 22nd annual Gamecocks charity basketball tournament held in the school, player registrations and raffles helped raise money for the Canadian Cancer Society and the Thomas J. Webb Memorial Scholarship Trust.

The players played for a cause while having as much fun as possible along the way. “It’s hard to get too worked up when you turn around to argue with the referee, and you’re arguing with a chicken,” said Sean Loucks, founder of the tournament.

Loucks, a basketball coach at Royal St. George’s and co-founder of the Albany Avenue Basketball Association, was a former player at York University who played professionally in Europe. Loucks has a true passion for the game and claims to have played, “more than 200 games a year across five leagues” when he was younger.

Loucks is 47, but says his body feels much older. Though he regrets the toll basketball has had on his body, he plays out his enthusiasm for the game through the Gamecocks charity tournament.

The 3-on-3 tournament entered its 22nd year on June 16. The tournament “is very inclusive,” Loucks said, and emphasizes the social aspects and charitable causes over winning and losing.

“The goal is to bring people together for a positive reason.”

The tournament is split into a high school division, an open division for all ages, and a legends division for players over 40 years of age. “There aren’t many tournaments with an over 40 league,” Loucks said. “I have one guy playing that’s over 70.”

“Your jump shot may be a little rusty, but every year you know you have a place to play,” said

Lance Winn, Loucks former teammate at York who has been involved with this tournament since it started. “It’s more about [being] social, about the exercise and reconnecting with people you have known for a long time,” he said.

Although it was only men who took to the court this year, Loucks said the tournament previously had a women’s division; however “it was hard to find a sustained interest by female players.” He said the tournament is open to women, and he’d reinstate the women’s division if interest returned.

The tournament is also a way to help give back to the community. Loucks has a personal connection to the Thomas J. Webb Memorial Scholarship. Thomas Webb was a friend of

Loucks, who relocated from Chicago to Toronto. Originally from Wisconsin, the two connected over their mutual love of basketball.

Loucks said Webb loved 3-on-3 basketball and had actually made it to the championship of a 3-on-3 tournament in Wisconsin that took place during the halftime of a Milwaukee Bucks NBA basketball game.

However, Webb lost a battle to cancer at the age of 35 in the late-1990s. When Loucks heard that Webb's parents had set up a scholarship fund in memory of their son, Loucks added that to the causes benefiting from the event.

"We did it first for the Canadian Cancer Society, but then (Tom's) parents told us about his scholarship and that was a lot closer to us," Loucks said.

James Webb, Thomas' father who still resides in Wisconsin, said they came to the game as recently as last year. The Webbs have family in Toronto and James Webb said they try their best to visit during tournament time.

"We've been there a number of years," James Webb said. "Sean has done a wonderful, wonderful job."

James Webb said the memorial scholarship for his son helps benefits three to four students graduating from the Sturgeon Bay Wisconsin high school. To be eligible, the students must be entering college to play varsity sport, have good grades and also show a commitment to helping their community.

"The cause is unbelievable," said Winn. "Any time you can do something to get so many people together in one place with the same cause in mind is great. It's very important."

Winn said the tournament is great for basketball in Toronto and they are always looking to help it grow, especially with the younger players in the area. "The legends division always kind of stays the same, but it's the teenagers we're looking to build on," he said.

Loucks said he believes this tournament means a lot to the Webb family and for the causes he's helping. "Any day you can play basketball is a good day," said Loucks. "Any day you can do something positive for someone else, that's a great day."